

A FICTION HOUSE MAGAZINE JUMBO COMICS, No. 103. Sept. 1947. Published monthly by Real Adventures Pub. Co., Inc. 670 Fifth Ave., New York 19, N. Y. T. T. Scott, Pres.; J. F. Byrne, Mgr. Editor; Claude R. Lapham, Editor; S. M. Iger, Art Director, Re-entered as second class matter Dec. 19, 1939, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879, Contents copyrighted, 1947, by Real Adventures Pub. Co., Inc. Yearly subscription in U. S. \$1,20; Foreign \$1,50. Single copies 10¢ in U. S. For advertising rates; Advertising Director, Fiction House, Inc., 670 Fifth Avenue, New York 19, N. Y. Printed in U.S.A.



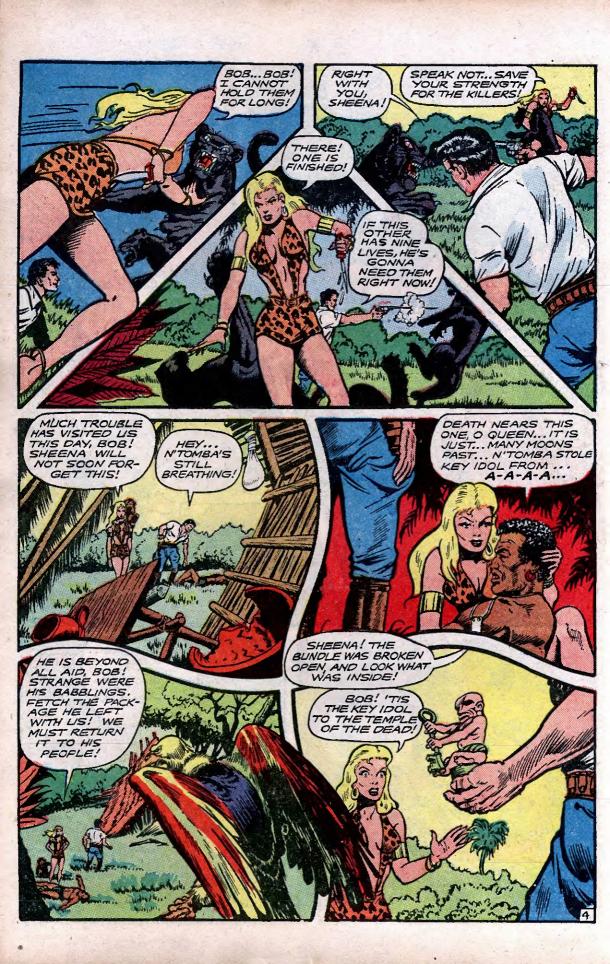












































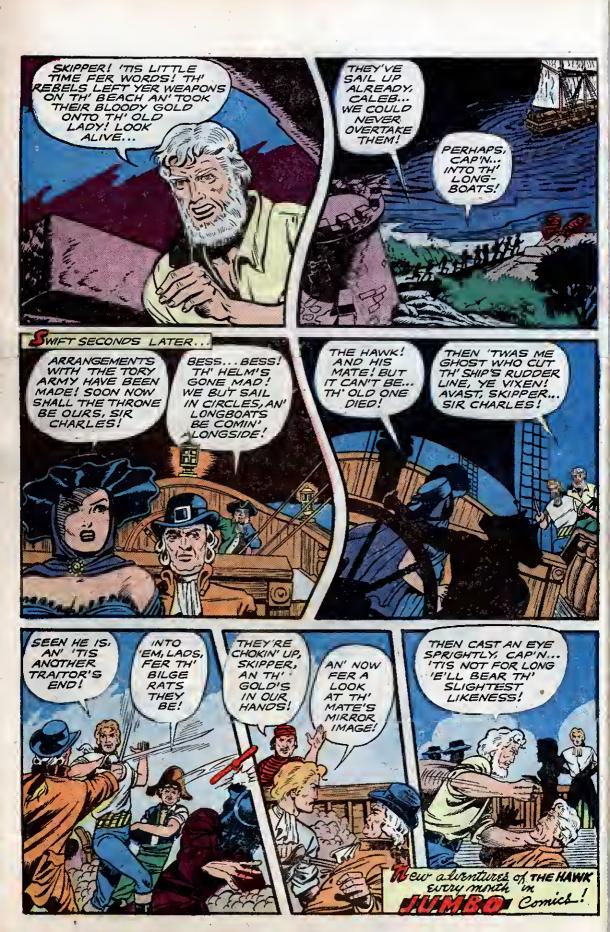


























SHEENA AND THE HANDS OF GREED

By W. MORGAN THOMAS

SHEENA blinked as the sharp rays of early morning sun cut through the jungle foliage. It was a clear dawn over the veldt and Sheena rubbed her eyes to a new day. Quickly she clambered down the tall beefwood tree that supported her tree hut home and ran to the bank of the swift flowing stream that coursed in a winding path through the valley.

Drawing a deep breath, Sheena paused a moment, and then gracefully plunged into the clear, tingling water. With long, easy strokes she pulled her smooth, lithe body through the bubbling rapids. It would be nice to play in such fashion all the day, thought Sheena, but there was work to be done. And where was her mate to help her? The thatch roof needed mending, the vine bridge must be repaired.

"Bob, Bob, lazy one," she called back to the tree hut. "The sun is high in the sky and

yet do you sleep. Come."

As Sheena scrambled to the river bank and combed the glistening water from her shining, golden hair, a sleepy head appeared at the door of the tree hut and a grumbling mate demanded to know why his peaceful slumber had been disturbed.

"Well do you know what must be done, Bob. And while you work, I must trek to the Nozami village and hold council with their chief. When night falls, I shall return."

Waving a quick farewell, Sheena swung lightly to the leafy tree tops and disappeared into the jungle depth. Swiftly she sped along the lofty route, her keen ears ever alert to the mixed symphony of jungle sounds, and sharp eyes ever open to lurking dangers. But today only peace seemed to fill her tropic domain.

Yet suddenly she stopped short. A familiar sound of jungle peril came to her. It was a slow, steady, rattling noise that rose evenly in a threatening crescendo, ceased for a moment, and then began again its sinister rhythm. Sheena looked down. Well did she know the call of the rattling viper. He was an old enemy of the forest, but Sheena would

not have paused for such a lowly killer if something else had not caught her eye.

Barely a foot from the hungry fangs of the rattler a white man was stretched unconscious, helpless. It was not a time for jungle might or jungle prowess. In mere seconds the killer would do his work. Sheena knew that wit and not muscle must divert the coiling murderer. Rapidly she ripped a patch of bark from the limb that held her and snatched a handful of GURU nuts from a slender twig. Nimble fingers curled the bark to a circular cup around the brittle nuts. Clenching the bark cylinder tightly in her hand, Sheena shook it in a short vibrating motion, first slowly and then faster and faster.

Only inches from the white man far below, the slithering snake suddenly lingered, raised its head and weaved its body to and fro; nervous, fascinated. In the tree overhead he recognized the call of his mate and hesitated, for so well did Sheena understand the jungle noises, that she could easily imitate his evil rattling with the clicking nuts against the bark she held.

It gave her the precious time she needed to reach the ground. For Sheena it was now but a matter of a swift slash of her gleaming blade and the scaly rattler would kill no more. Soon it was done and Sheena turned her attention to the white man.

He was just opening his eyes and gazing in astonishment at the tall, blond girl standing over him. Turning his head, he saw the dead snake and Sheena's dripping blade. A look of deep gratefulness filled his eyes.

"You must have been just in time. I don't think I'll ever know how to thank you."

"There is no need. But tell me, what brings

you to the jungle?"

"My name is Folsom. I'm a lawyer from America and have been searching a long time for a certain man. I've been told he lives here in the jungle somewhere. Anyway, the fellow has just come into great wealth. His father died about a month ago and left him a sizable fortune. Aside from that, he is heir to a large estate and an enormous business. I must find him so that he can return to the states and manage affairs. It is a great responsibility, but he's a very lucky man. He'll be among the richest men in the country."

"And what is this man called?"

"His name? Reynolds . . . Robert Reynolds."

Sheena gasped. It was nearly impossible to believe, but she knew it was true. Bob, her Bob, now an important man in another strange world she knew nothing of, a world of white men and tall buildings, a world of strange machines and strange ways of living. Sheena knew only the jungle and the ways of the jungle. But she and Bob had been happy here together. Must her mate leave her now forever?

Sheena bowed her head and tears filled her eyes. No foe of the jungle had ever made her cry, no hidden terrors of the savage forests had ever struck fear into her heart. But to live without Bob, to go on without her faithful mate by her side sharing the great adventures of the jungle, could she bear this?

Yet she knew she was helpless to prevent his going, if it must be. She would not stand in his way. If fortune had smiled upon her mate, she would be glad for him and be thankful for the memory of happy moments spent with him in their jungle home. Sheena turned to the lawyer.

"I know this man Reynolds—I know him well. Come, I will guide you to him."

"Again I thank you. Till just before you saved my life, I had a guide, a man called Dawson. I met him on the riverboat, and he claimed to know where Mr. Reynolds lived. So naturally I took him at his word. At the spot where you found me he began to quarrel for no reason, knocked me out with his revolver butt and left me to die. I cannot understand it. I haven't been robbed. But let us go before evening falls."

With a heart heavy with misery, Sheena led the lawyer down a twisting jungle path toward the tree hut she had left in gay spirit only a short while before. The thought of parting with Bob left her glum and melancholy and she walked with dragging steps through her beloved jungle. Thinking only of her own plight, Sheena was unaware of

any peril until she and the lawyer were directly before the tree hut.

It was then that a curt voice barked an order and Sheena looked up, startled to see her mate facing the muzzle of a black revolver held by a grim, bearded white man with the dark look of death clouding his glinting, beady eyes. The lawyer at her side paused in astonishment.

"Dawson!"

"Yes, Folsom. I can't say I'm glad to see you alive. Now both of you get over here with the unfortunate Mr. Reynolds. You will have the honor of sharing his fate. You see, I intend to be the only one leaving this jungle alive."

No longer did Sheena consider her own sorrow. It was the very life of her mate that now stood at stake. Indeed three lives depended on the dread skill that had made her queen of the jungle. Dawson raised his revolver. In his evil stare Sheena saw reflected the same murderous intent she had seen in the eyes of the viper she had destroyed to save the lawyer's life.

The rattling viper! Could not this killer also be destroyed as the coiling one? A slim chance, but . . . Sheena slowly reached into a pouch of her leopard pelt. No, luckily she had not discarded the GURU nuts and the section of bark. Holding the bark cup behind her, Sheena began the slow, deadly rattle of the striking killer snake. Dawson whirled, fright written in every line of his face.

"A rattler! Where . . . ?"

He never finished. The glittering, razorsharp blade of Sheena was already buried in his throat. As Sheena gazed down on his lifeless form, Bob put a gentle arm about her waist.

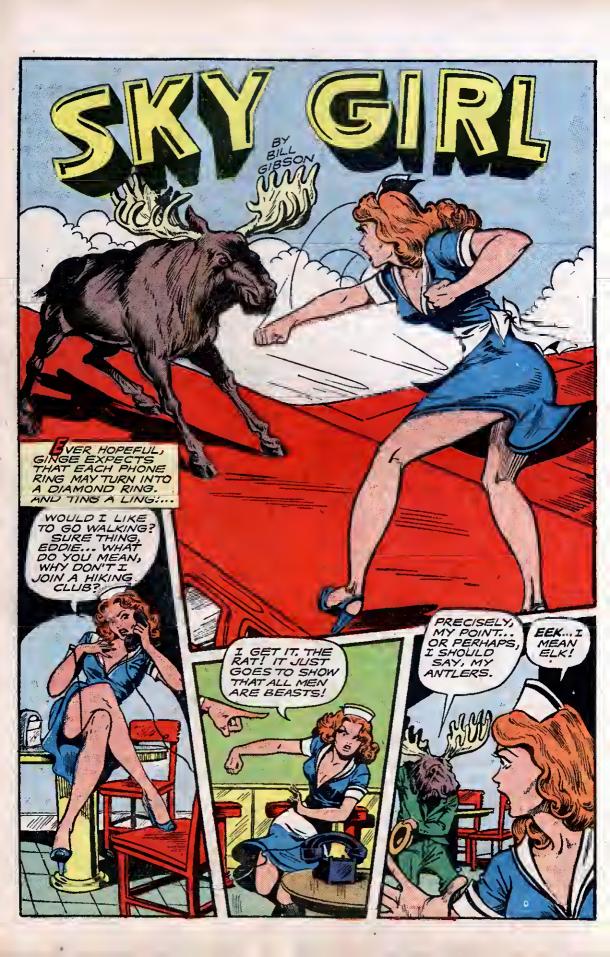
"It should have been done long ago, Sheena. His name is not Dawson. I'm ashamed to admit his name is Reynolds, Paul Reynolds, a distant cousin of mine. With me dead he would have inherited my father's fortune. Foolish man, I had no intentions of claiming it. My home is here in the jungle—with you, my Sheena."

It was now Folsom who spoke.

"But, Mr. Reynolds, the estate . . . what will I tell them?"

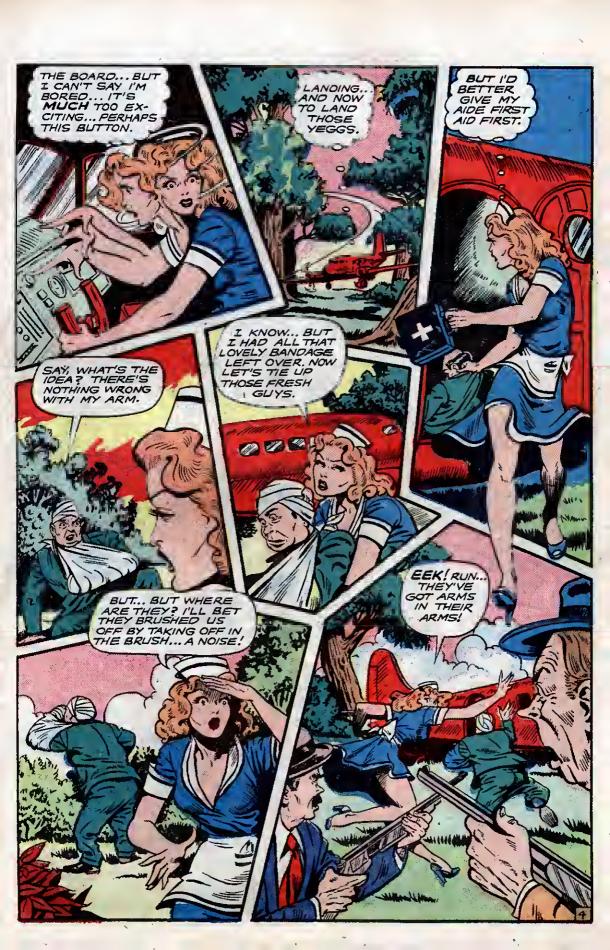
"Tell them . . . tell them you never found me."

-THE END-















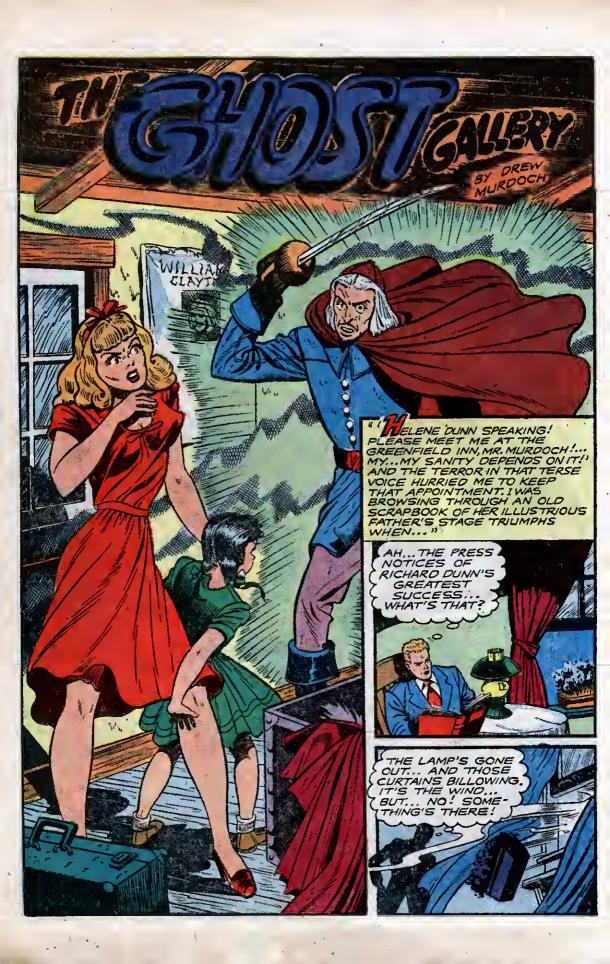










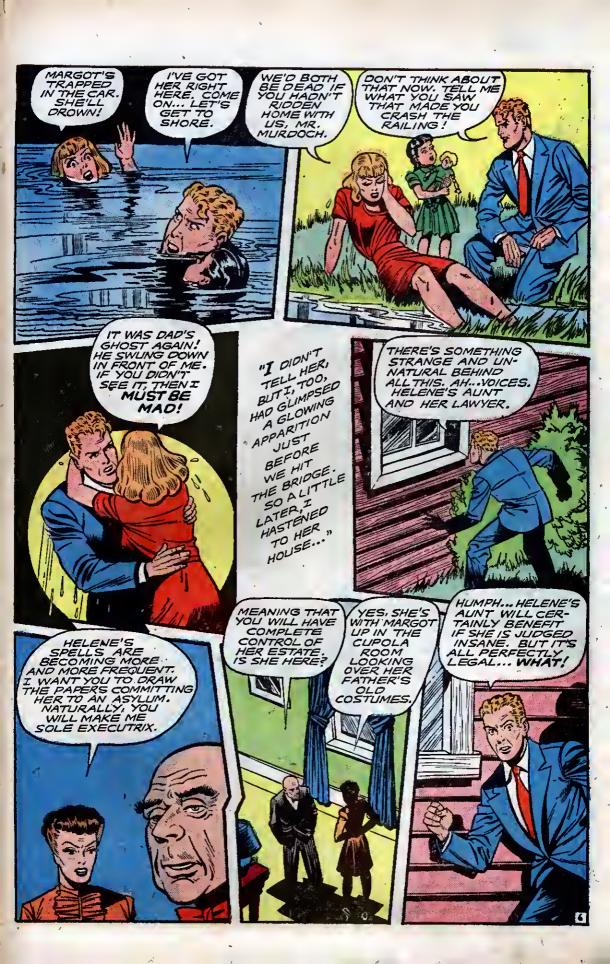




















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